

Rules Applying to the Conduct of Representative Town Meetings

Walpole, Massachusetts

*As amended by the first meeting (Spring Session) of the Annual Town Meeting (1983)
and
As amended by the first meeting (Spring Session) of the Annual Town Meeting (1986)
and
As amended by the third meeting (Spring Session) of the Annual Town Meeting (1987)
and
As amended by the first meeting (Spring Session) of the Annual Town Meeting (1995)
and
As amended by the first meeting (Spring Session) of the Annual Town Meeting (1997)
and
As amended by the first meeting (Spring Session) of the Annual Town Meeting (1998)
And
As amended by the first meeting (Spring Session) of the Annual Town Meeting (2001)*

**Rules Applying to the Conduct of Representative
Town Meetings**

Walpole, Massachusetts

As amended by the first meeting (Spring Session) of the Annual Town Meeting (1983)
and
As amended by the first meeting (Spring Session) of the Annual Town Meeting (1986)
and
As amended by the third meeting (Spring Session) of the Annual Town Meeting (1987)
and
As amended by the first meeting (Spring Session) of the Annual Town Meeting (1995)
and
As amended by the first meeting (Spring Session) of the Annual Town Meeting (1997)
and
As amended by the first meeting (Spring Session) of the Annual Town Meeting (1998)
And
As amended by the first meeting (Spring Session) of the Annual Town Meeting (2001)

Applying to the Conduct of Representative Town Meetings

Walpole, Massachusetts

The following rules of procedure shall become effective upon a majority vote of the elected representatives of the Annual Town Meeting of 1972 and as amended under Rule 10.

1. SEATING

- a. All RTM Members shall sit in an area designated for them as displayed at the entrances to the meeting.
- b. Individuals who are not RTM Members, but who serve on Town Committees, or are in attendance in support of Town Officials, and wish to be seated in a reserved area must make their presence known to the Moderator.
- c. All other individuals must be seated in the unreserved area. If more space is needed to accommodate the public, the Moderator will realign the reserved area.

2. SPEAKERS

- a. Any individual wishing to address the assembly must raise his hand to gain attention and shall only be allowed to speak after being recognized by the Moderator.
- b. When recognized by the Moderator, RTM Members shall identify themselves by name and precinct number. Town Officials and Town Committee Members shall state their official title. All other speakers shall state their name and residence.
- c. All speakers who have been retained, paid or otherwise, or who are speaking on behalf of or as a representative of a group or organization must so state when identifying themselves.
- d. The only reason for speaking without the recognition of the Moderator shall be to question the conduct, procedure, or legality of the discussion at hand. The RTM Member may stand and vocally state "Mr. Moderator ...Point of Order." The Moderator shall immediately suspend debate, and recognize the RTM Member who shall state the reason for the call of a Point of Order. No further discussion may take place until the Point of Order is addressed and ruled upon by the Moderator.
- e. The Moderator shall attempt to use the order below when recognizing speakers. This shall in no way restrict the number of times a person may speak nor restrict the Moderator from calling speakers in any order. The Moderator shall make an

effort to recognize an individual who wishes to speak for the first time, over those who have previously spoken to the issue.

1. Primary spokespersons for or against the motion who are making a presentation.
 2. The Finance Committee Spokesperson.
 3. Town Officials and Town Committee Members, including ex officio members according to the Town Charter, whose official duties or Committee have relevance to the motion.
 4. RTM Members.
 5. All other speakers. These speakers may speak for not more than 5 minutes. Permission to speak longer than 5 minutes may be granted by a majority vote of the RTM Members.
- f. Presentations being given by the speakers listed in Sections 2e-1, 2e-2, and 2e-3 may be limited to a specified time period if recommended by the Moderator or by a RTM Member via a motion. Any recommendation to limit a presentation must also be approved by a majority vote of the RTM Members. A presentation time period may subsequently be extended by a motion which is adopted by a majority vote of the RTM Members.

3. ARTICLE DEBATE

The sponsors of an Article shall not be bound by the recommendation of the Finance Committee. A negative main motion, “no action”, shall be debatable, and the sponsor(s) or RTM Member(s) may speak against dismissal or postponement in favor of affirmative action. Defeating the “no action” is not alone sufficient to establish action on an Article. After defeat of this “no action” motion, the Moderator shall state that no motion has been made and request that a motion be made. A sponsor or RTM member may then make an alternative motion. In the absence of an alternative motion, the next article shall be taken up.

4. CLOSING DEBATE (Moving the Question)

- a. A motion to close debate may be made by an RTM Member by first gaining recognition from the Moderator as provided under Rule 2a. Such a motion is non-debatable, and the person making the motion must not precede his motion by any comment whatsoever, or the motion and the speaker will be declared out of order and debate shall continue. Upon a properly made motion, the Moderator shall immediately call for a vote on the motion.
- b. A motion to close debate requires a two-thirds vote for passage.

5. METHOD OF TAKING VOTES

- a. There are four methods for taking votes. They are Voice, Standing, Roll Call, and Secret Ballot.
- b. A motion will carry only when the affirmative vote, (i.e. "Aye" or "Yes") meets the quantitative requirements established either by the General Laws, or any established procedural rules (majority, two-thirds, four-fifths, etc.). Any vote, requiring a majority vote for passage that ends in a tie shall result in defeat of the motion.
- c. Voice Vote: The RTM members, when called upon by the Moderator, vote by voice; i.e.: "Aye" or "No". This shall be the primary method of voting.
- d. Standing Vote:
 1. The Moderator shall conduct a Standing Vote in any of the following cases:
 - i. If the Moderator is unable to call a Voice Vote.
 - ii. If the motion being voted upon requires other than a simple or 2/3 majority, and the Voice Vote is not unanimous.
 - iii. If no less than seven (7) RTM Members stand and challenge the call of a Voice Vote.
 2. The hall shall be divided into sections by the Moderator. Two Tellers for each section, chosen from the RTM Members, shall be appointed by the Moderator. The Moderator shall also appoint alternative Tellers, as needed, to temporarily replace any Teller who wishes to speak on an article. RTM members shall stand in accordance with their vote when asked to do so by the Moderator. The Tellers, for each section, shall each count the section, and agree on the count, or conduct a recount. The Tellers shall use the public address system to announce their count to the Moderator and the public at the same time. The Moderator shall count the votes of the Tellers by a show of hands.
- e. Roll Call Vote:
 1. The Moderator shall conduct a Roll Call vote in the following cases:
 - i. If prior to taking any vote, a motion is made from the floor, and seconded by no less than twenty (20) RTM Members. Such a motion requires a majority for adoption.
 - ii. If no less than twenty (20) RTM Members stand and challenge the call of a Standing Vote.
 2. The Town Clerk shall call the roll, by precinct. RTM Members must respond to the Roll Call with "Aye", "No", or "Abstain". At the conclusion of the calling of the roll the Clerk shall request the vote of any RTM Member that was not recorded earlier. The Moderator will call the

results of a Roll Call Vote on the basis of those present and voting, assuming that a legal quorum is considered to exist.

f. Secret Ballot Vote:

1. A Secret Ballot Vote shall be conducted in the following cases:
 - i. The Moderator shall conduct a Secret Ballot Vote if prior to taking any vote, a motion is made from the floor and seconded by no less than twenty (20) RTM Members. Such a motion requires a two-thirds vote for adoption.
 - ii. In the case of the absence of the Moderator, the election of a Temporary Moderator may be by Secret Ballot on a motion made and seconded from the floor. Such a motion requires a majority for adoption.
2. The RTM Members from each precinct, shall come to the front of the hall and register with a Teller and receive a Ballot. The RTM members will then mark the Ballot in the manner directed and deposit it in the Ballot Box. The Tellers will then count the Ballots with the Town Clerk. The Moderator will call the results of a Secret Ballot.

g. Motions for either a Roll Call Vote or Secret Ballot Vote are not subject to debate, nor may such a motion be reconsidered.

h. There is no appeal to the Moderator's call of a Roll Call or Secret Ballot Vote.

6. RECONSIDERATION

The word “**reconsideration**” applies to a vote, not to an article. The intention of a motion to reconsider, therefore, is to reverse a previously taken vote, regardless of reasons. The motion on which the vote was originally taken is exactly the same motion that will be before the house again if the motion to reconsider is carried.

- a. Reconsideration on any Article, or portion of an Article, if it has previously been divided, is permitted.
- b. A motion to reconsider, if defeated, may not be raised a second time.
- c. A motion to reconsider, if carried, may not be raised again unless the original vote is reversed. (Example; the original vote was in favor: the vote is reconsidered and the resulting vote is against: the vote against may once more be reconsidered.)
- d. The motion to reconsider is not debatable. The mover must explain, in not more than three minutes why such a motion is being made, following which the vote will immediately be taken, assuming that the mover has made no statements requiring comment by Town Counsel or the Moderator.
- e. A motion to reconsider requires a two-thirds vote for passage.

7. CONSIDERING ARTICLES OUT OF ORDER

- a. Consideration of salary changes under negotiations may be deferred until the conclusion of negotiations.
- b. Upon motion of the Moderator, or any RTM Member, Articles may be considered out of printed sequence only by a majority vote of the RTM.
- c. A vote to change the order of articles for consideration may not be reconsidered.

8. NOTIFICATION OF FUTURE MEETINGS

- a. In conformity with the ACT establishing Representative Town Government in Walpole, Chapter 709 of the ACTS of 1969, and in conformity with the Town Charter, written notification of the first session of all Town meetings will be mailed to all Town Meeting Representatives.
- b. The first session of all Town Meetings shall be scheduled on a Monday evening and, in the event of a lack of a quorum, shall automatically be rescheduled for the following Monday evening and shall be so posted by the Town Clerk in one or more locally distributed newspapers. Additional sessions, as may be required, shall be scheduled for the following consecutive Wednesdays and Mondays until dissolution.
- c. A Town Meeting shall be considered postponed on any day on which school, at the location of the Town meeting, has been canceled and shall reconvene on the next nearest Monday or Wednesday evening.
- d. The Moderator, after consulting with appropriate Town officials, has the authority to postpone Town Meeting due to inclement weather or other emergencies. Town Meeting shall reconvene on the next nearest Monday or Wednesday evening.

9. RULES COMMITTEE

- a. A Standing Committee called the Rules Committee consisting of one (1) RTM Member from each Precinct shall be elected at the first meeting (Spring Session) of the Annual Town Meeting.
- b. Each Precinct shall have its caucus at its own convenience and will be prepared to offer a candidate for re-appointment or a new candidate. Upon receipt of a complete slate, the Moderator shall put their names to the RTM Members.
- c. If a vacancy occurs prior to the opening of Town Meeting the Town Clerk shall notify all RTM Members from that Precinct of the opening. The Moderator shall appoint a RTM Member from the same Precinct to serve until the next Special or Annual Town Meeting. At the next Special or Annual Town Meeting, the Precinct shall select a member of the Rules Committee as called for in section (b), above.

10. RULES CHANGES

- a. All proposed changes in Rules will be referred to the Rules Committee which will consider them and make recommendations as the first order of business at the first meeting (Spring Session) of the Annual Town Meeting.
- b. Changes in the Rules, presented in accordance with (a) above shall become immediately effective upon a two thirds vote of the RTM Members present.
- c. Rules governing all other matters not specifically covered herein or by Rules later adopted, remain within the province of the Moderator to decide and to order.
- d. The Rules Committee shall consider all matters pertaining to the conduct of RTM Meetings.
 1. When ordered by a majority of RTM Members.
 2. When ordered by the Moderator.
 3. On their initiative.

11. MODERATOR APPOINTED COMMITTEES

- a. Study committees to be appointed by the Moderator require a two-thirds vote of the meeting so to order.

12. ADJOURNMENT, TIME, DISSOLUTION, UNLESS OTHERWISE GOVERNED BY LAW

A meeting may be adjourned at any time upon a motion made and seconded and carried by a simple majority. Such a motion shall carry a time and place for convening the subsequent meeting as stipulated under Section 8b and 8c.

13. ATTRIBUTION OF WRITTEN INFORMATION

Any written information distributed, inside the building, to Town Meeting Representatives must be identifiable as to the responsible individual. In the case of a committee or citizens group, written information, distributed inside the building, must include the name of the Chairman or authorized representative of said group.

14. BROADCAST OF TOWN MEETING

If the Moderator determines that the proceedings will likely be interrupted by the broadcast coverage including lighting, roving cameras, and interviews being conducted while Town meeting is in session, the Moderator may recommend changes to be made after informing the RTM members and securing a majority vote.

15. ORDER OF DOCUMENTS TO BE USED WHEN CONDUCTING TOWN MEETING

Town Meeting shall be conducted under the following documents. In the case of any conflict, the priority of the documents shall be as follows.

1. Massachusetts General Laws
2. Walpole Town Charter
3. Walpole Town Meeting Rules
4. Town Meeting Time

Appendix I

Reference Chart

Types of Motions

Motion	Second Required	Debate Allowed	Amend Allowed	Vote Necessary	Recon-sider Allowed	Notes
Privileged Motions						
Dissolve	Yes	No	No	Majority	No	
Adjourn	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	No	
Quorum	No	No	No	No	No	
Time to Adjourn	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes	
Subsidiary Motions						
Table	Yes	No	No	2/3 Vote	Yes	
Move Question	Yes	No*	No	2/3 Vote	No	*No other comments may be made
Limits on Debate	Yes	No	No	2/3 Vote*	Yes	*Presentation time is set by a majority vote
Postpone to a Certain Time	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes	
Refer to Committee	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority*	Yes	*2/3 vote required to set up committee with Moderator appointees
Substitute Motion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes	
Postpone Indefinite	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	Yes	
Incidental Motions						
Point of Order	No	No	No	No	No	May interrupt speaker
Appeal	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	Yes	
Divide Question	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	No	
Separate Consideration	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	No	
Roll Call	20 Mem*	No	No	Majority	No	*20 Members must second
Secret Ballot	20 Mem*	No	No	2/3 Vote	No	*20 Members must second
Nominations	No	No	No	Plurality	No	
Withdraw	No	No	No	Majority	No	
Suspend Rules	Yes	No	No	2/3 Vote*	No	May be more restrictive or out of order depending on the rule
Main Motions						
Reconsider	Yes	No*	No	2/3 Vote	No	*3 minutes allowed to explain
Take off Table	Yes	No	No	Majority	No	
Advance Article	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	No	
Main	Yes	Yes	Yes	Depends*	Yes	*Set by Law or Charter

Based on Town Meeting Time and amended according to Massachusetts General Law, the Walpole Home Rule Charter, and the Walpole Town Meeting Rules.